



## Winning the War on Terror

By U.S. Sen. John Cornyn

After a flurry of last-minute activity, Congress is now adjourned for six weeks. Most members will use the time to return to their districts and communicate directly with their constituents in advance of national elections on Nov. 7.

This period will be beneficial for our democracy. Elections help cut through the fog of rhetoric coming from Washington, and hopefully provide voters with clear choices. We all benefit when voters give direction for the future, and deliver their evaluations of the job Congress is doing.

A key issue in this election will be prosecution of the war on terror. Americans are, understandably, reluctant participants in foreign wars. We rightly want to know that the significant costs involved – the precious lives and resources – are necessary to protect United States national security interests.

Our campaign against terrorism is not like previous wars, with battles fought by uniformed combatants. America is now at war with an enemy who knows no borders, wears no uniform, and has no respect for human life.

The enemy we face is united simply by a devotion to a radical, violent interpretation of Islam, and a dedication to the destruction of democracy.

The first duty of the federal government is to protect our people from future attacks. So it is critical that we recognize the true nature of this threat, and the strategy and tactics being used, and address them accordingly.

Before Congress recessed last month, it approved a controversial measure covering the way we treat apprehended terrorist suspects. This measure was particularly important because this war promises to be extended, deadly and difficult.

The Bringing Terrorists to Justice Act will give the President clear authority to prosecute those who have threatened our nation and our citizens, and will ensure these terrorists are brought to justice. It will also provide clear guidelines covering how terror suspects can be interrogated and prosecuted. The goal is to protect our citizens while observing international standards of justice and our treaty obligations.

I believe this legislation well accomplishes these goals. It allows continuation of a high-value detainee interrogation program that has provided

important information about future terrorist plans, and has demonstrably saved American lives – both civilian and military. It does so while ensuring that these unlawful enemy combatants are treated in a manner consistent with our laws and values. In fact, they will be provided with more procedural protections than the Geneva Conventions require even for prisoners of war.

Let's be clear. The new law will not provide these terrorist combatants with the same legal rights available to U.S. citizens accused of a crime. But it will make certain that as we bring terrorists like Khalid Sheik Mohammed to justice, we are not forced to hand over classified national security information that will find its way to other terrorists. It will allow aggressive interrogation techniques, some of them not to be made public, that have already proven their value in preventing attacks on our homeland and our military forces.

The Bringing Terrorists to Justice Act was approved by substantial bipartisan majorities in both the U.S. House and Senate. The President will sign it into law. Yet the bill was opposed by a vigorous Congressional minority who were concerned the legislation did not provide adequate rights to accused terrorists. It promises to be a central topic of discussion in the coming election season, and it should be.

We are a compassionate nation, and a civilized one. But it is the duty of those of us in public office to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, first and foremost. Texans can be confident I will do everything possible, in the U.S. Senate, to ensure that we fulfill this primary responsibility.

*Sen. Cornyn is a member of the following Senate Committees: Armed Services, Judiciary, Budget, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and Joint Economic. He is the chairman of the subcommittees on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship and Emerging Threats and Capabilities. Cornyn served previously as Texas Attorney General, Texas Supreme Court Justice and Bexar County District Judge.*

*For Sen. Cornyn's previous Texas Times columns: [www.cornyn.senate.gov/column](http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/column)*